

Mishlei 08-01

The Call of Wisdom (8:1 – 8:36)

Key Concepts

Mishlei now returns to the idealized metaphor of Wisdom that was introduced in the first chapter (Segment 01-05). Wisdom is represented as an angelic spirit that expresses Hashem's desires to every person, admonishing him to respect wisdom, acquire it, and act on it. Wisdom is essential to human existence and the voice of Wisdom is calling out to each and everyone of us, no matter where we are located.

Exploring Mishlei

After being re-introduced to the voice of Wisdom (Part 1), we hear that voice emphasizing the truth and authenticity of the wisdom that has come down to us (Part 2). We are taught that although we will be asked to exert ourselves to acquire wisdom, that effort will be very worthwhile and necessary. First of all, we need to realize its value as being far superior to any commodity we hunger after (Part 3). Secondly, we must be motivated by the fear of Hashem, because Hashem has chosen wisdom as His way of expressing the choice we need to make between good and evil (Part 4). Accordingly, His system of rewarding mankind for making the right choices in life are directly related to the wisdom that we need to guide those choices (Part 5).

The voice of Wisdom now reminds us of the role wisdom was given by Hashem in the Creation of the world (Part 6). Without a pre-existing wisdom, the world would not have been created and we would not exist. After Hashem created wisdom, He treasured it as a parent treasures an infant child; He interacted with it playfully in a loving relationship for He appreciated its depth and its wonders. In His goodness, Hashem then gave that treasure to mankind. It was His hope that mankind would appreciate this gift and recreate the same kind of loving relationship with wisdom.

Finally, Mishlei concludes with an admonishment to take these lessons to heart and act on them (Part 7), using the methods of *mussar* (moral discipline) to overcome the challenges inherent in acquiring wisdom and responding to its requirements.

PART 1. INTRODUCTION. As in Segment 01-05, the student of Mishlei is again advised to pay attention to the spirit of Wisdom that is calling him. She seems

everywhere, but in truth, she is calling from within his own heart.

(א) הלא חכמה תקרא ותבונה תתן קולה: (ב) בראש מרומים עלי דרך בית
נתיבות נצבה: (ג) ליד שערים לפי קרת מבוא פתחים תרנה: (ד) אליכם אישים
אקרא וקולי אל בני אדם: (ה) הבינו פתאים ערמה וכסילים הבינו לב:

(1) [My son,] is not wisdom calling you, and is not [the spirit of] understanding raising her voice. (2) [You can see her calling from] atop the heights along the way. The place where the pathways diverge, [that's where] she is standing. near the gateways of the city, at the doorways she cries out: (4) "To you O men [of character] I call, but my voice [also goes out] to [all of] mankind. (5) [You] naive people, understand cleverness. [You] fools, understand [knowledge in] your heart."

PART 2. THE TRUTH OF WISDOM. The voice of wisdom emphasizes that her words are directly relevant to her listener's life.

(ו) שמעו כי נגידים אדבר ומפתח שפתי מישרים: (ז) כי אמת יהגה חכי ותועבת
שפתי רשע: (ח) בצדק כל אמרי פי אין בהם נפתל ועקש: (ט) כלם נכחים למבין
וישרים למצאי דעת:

(6) Listen, for I will speak words of significance and the opening of my lips [will reveal] valid concepts. (7) For my palate, will utter the truth. Evil is an abomination to my lips. (8) All the teachings of my mouth [are presented] with a righteous [approach]. There is no twisting or distortion in them. (9) They are all correct [so that they can be relied upon] by the one who understands. They are straightforward to those who strive for knowledge.

PART 3. THE VALUE OF WISDOM. The value of wisdom surpasses the most precious metals for it helps you evade the trap of the yetzer hara (evil inclination) and make the right choices in life.

(י) קחו מוסרי ואל כסף ודעת מחרוץ נבחר: (יא) כי טובה חכמה מפנינים וכל
חפצים לא ישוו בה: (יב) אני חכמה שכנתי ערמה ודעת מזמות אמצא:

(10) Take my mussar (lessons of moral discipline) rather than silver; take knowledge rather than choice gold. (11) For wisdom is better than pearls; all desires cannot compare to it. (12) I am wisdom; [where] I dwell [there is] cleverness. I find the knowledge of schemes [that are designed to trap you].

PART 4. THE MOTIVATION FOR WISDOM. The primary motivation for putting in the

effort to acquire wisdom is the fear of Hashem. Hashem has determined wisdom as the measure of what pleases Him. Thus, to avoid antagonizing Hashem, one must be guided by wisdom. Accordingly, He will help those who seek wisdom to acquire it.

(יג) יִרְאֵת ה' שְׁנֵאת רַע גָּאָה וְגֵאוֹן וְדָרְךְ רַע וּפִי תִהְיֶה כְּתֵּן שְׂנֵאתִי: (יד) לִי עֵצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָה אֲנִי בִּינָה לִי גְבוּרָה: (טו) בֵּי מַלְכִים יִמְלֹכוּ וְרוֹזְנִים יַחְקִקוּ צָדֵק: (טז) בֵּי שָׁרִים יִשְׁרוּ וּנְדִיבִים כָּל שִׁפְטֵי צָדֵק: (יז) אֲנִי אֶהְבִּיה אֶהְבִּי אֶהְבִּי וּמִשְׁחֵרֵי יִמְצְאוּנִי:
 (13) [The acquisition of wisdom is motivated by] the fear of Hashem, which is the hatred of evil. [Wisdom declares:] I hate pride and haughtiness, and the way of evil. [I hate] a mouth that speaks with duplicity. (14) Counsel is mine and the eternal truth of the Torah. I am understanding; strength [of character] is mine. (15) Through me kings will reign; rulers will decree justice. (16) Through me government officials will administer, as well as officers of the courts and all who judge righteously. (17) I love those who love me; those who seek me will find me.

PART 5. THE REWARDS OF WISDOM. You will not be at a disadvantage if you dedicate your energies to learning Torah, for wisdom brings with great rewards from Hashem.

(יח) עֵשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד אֲתִי הוֹן עֲתֵק וּצְדָקָה: (יט) טוֹב פְּרִי מִחֲרוֹץ וּמִפָּז וּתְבוּאוֹתֵי מִכֶּסֶף נְבָחָר: (כ) בְּאַרְח צְדָקָה אֶהְלֵךְ בְּתוֹךְ נְתִיבוֹת מִשְׁפָּט: (כא) לְהִנְחִיל אֶהְבִּי יֵשׁ וְאַצְרִיתֵיהֶם אֲמַלֵּא:
 (18) Wealth and honor are with me, great fortune and the good name of righteousness. (19) My fruit is better than gold, [even] fine gold. My produce is better than choice silver. (20) For I walk on the road of righteousness, within the pathways of justice, (21) to grant permanently [to] those who love me the existing [fruit of their own virtue]. And I will fill their storehouses.

PART 6. THE ORIGIN OF WISDOM. Wisdom is more ancient than the world. It is the very purpose and design of Creation. (See Mishlei Segment 03-05.) Even before mankind was created, wisdom was a source of joy to Hashem. He then passed on His precious gift to mankind.

(כב) ה' קִנְיֵי רֵאשִׁית דְּרָכּוֹ קִדְּם מִפְּעֻלּוֹ מֵאֶז: (כג) מֵעוֹלָם נִסְכָּתִי מֵרֵאשׁ מִקְדָּמִי אֶרְץ: (כד) בְּאִין תְּהֵמוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי בְּאִין מֵעֵינֹת נִכְבְּדֵי מַיִם: (כה) בְּטָרָם הָרִים

הִטְבַּעוּ לִפְנֵי גְבוּעוֹת חוֹלְלֹתַי: (כו) עַד לֹא עָשָׂה אֶרֶץ וְחוּצוֹת וְרֹאשׁ עִפְרוֹת תִּבְּל: (כז)
 בְּהִכִּינוּ שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָנִי בְּחִיקוֹ חוּג עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם: (כח) בְּאַמְצוֹ שְׁחָקִים מִמַּעַל בְּעִזּוֹ
 עֵינֹת תְהוֹם: (כט) בְּשׁוּמוֹ לַיִם חָקוּ וַיִּמֵּם לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ פִּי בְּחִיקוֹ מוֹסְדֵי אֶרֶץ: (ל)
 וְאַהֲיָה אֶצְלוֹ אֲמוֹן וְאַהֲיָה שַׁעֲשָׁעִים יוֹם יוֹם מִשְׁחָקֶת לִפְנָיו בְּכָל יֵת: (לא) מִשְׁחָקֶת
 בְּתִבֵּל אֶרְצוֹ וְשַׁעֲשָׁעִי אֶת בְּנֵי אָדָם:

(22) [Wisdom declares:] I belonged to Hashem as the first of His way, before His works of old, [creating the world.] (23) I was consecrated [to reign] from the beginning of eternity. I was among [the creations] that preceded the earth. (24) I was formed when there were still no watery depths; when there were no pools abounding with water. (25) I was formed before the mountains were made firm, before the hills. (26) [I was formed] when He had not yet made the [core regions of] the earth or the outlying regions, or the first dust of the inhabited world. (27) I was there when He established the heavens, when He set a spherical shape to the face of the deep. (28) [I was there] when He braced the skies above, when he reinforced the wellsprings of the watery depths. (29) [I was there] when He set a boundary to the sea whereby the waters would not transgress His word, when He decreed the foundations of the earth. (30) [Before the appearance of mankind], I was His infant child. I was then His delight every day, frolicking before Him at all times. (31) Then, when man was created, I frolicked in the inhabited areas of His earth and became a delight to mankind.

PART 7. HEEDING WISDOM. The voice of Wisdom concludes by admonishing its audience to heed the lessons of wisdom, because in wisdom there is life and whoever rejects wisdom is allying himself with death.

(לב) וְעַתָּה בָּנִים שְׁמַעוּ לִי וְאַשְׁרֵי דְרָכַי יִשְׁמְרוּ: (לג) שְׁמַעוּ מוֹסֵר וְחִכְמוּ וְאַל
 תִּנְפְּרוּ: (לד) אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם שָׁמַעַ לִי לְשִׁקֵּד עַל דְּלֹתַי יוֹם יוֹם לְשִׁמּוֹר מְזוּזוֹת פְּתַחַי:
 (לה) כִּי מִצְּאֵי מִצְּאֵי חַיִּים וַיִּפְּקוּ רְצוֹן מֵה': (לו) וְחִטְּאֵי חִמְס נִפְשׁוּ כָּל מִשְׁנֵאֵי
 אֶהְבוּ מוֹת:

(32) And now, children, listen to me. Fortunate are those who keep to my ways. (33) Listen to [the teachings of] mussar and gain wisdom. Don't refuse [it]. (34) Fortunate is the person who listens to me, coming regularly to my doors every day, [returning again and again] to the doorposts of my

entranceways. (35) For he who finds me finds life and gains the goodwill of Hashem. (36) But the one who sins against me does violence to his soul. All who hate me love death [because they are the enemies of life.]

Learning Mishlei

PART 1. INTRODUCTION.

(א) הֲלֹא חֲכָמָה תִּקְרָא
וּתְבוּנָה תִּתֵּן קוֹלָהּ:

My son, think about what I have been saying about the call of wisdom (Segment 01-05). Surely you must hear it. **Is not wisdom calling you — הֲלֹא חֲכָמָה וּתְבוּנָה תִּתֵּן? And is not the spirit of understanding raising her voice — תִּקְרָא קוֹלָהּ asking** for you to pay attention? Wisdom appears to you openly in the light of day. She is not like the “strange woman”, the voice of temptation that approaches you at twilight (Segment 07-02), when your vision is clouded.

(ב) בְּרֹאשׁ מְרוֹמִים עָלֵי דָרֶךְ
בַּיִת נְתִיבוֹת נֹצֵבָה:

You can't evade the call of wisdom, for wisdom is part of you, implanted by your Creator. Wisdom comes to you from the sublime heights of Creation and so you can see her calling from **atop the heights along the way — בְּרֹאשׁ מְרוֹמִים עָלֵי דָרֶךְ**, where you surely must see her. Each day when you have a choice to make, there at **the place where the pathways diverge — בַּיִת נְתִיבוֹת**, that's where **she is standing — בַּיִת נְתִיבוֹת נֹצֵבָה** to advise you on the right choice.

(ג) לֵיָד שְׁעָרִים לְפִי קָרַת
מְבוֹא פְתָחִים תִּרְנָה:

As you gain in knowledge and understanding, you will find that wisdom follows a progression from broad concepts that are understood by all to ever more refined details and insights. This progression is symbolized by a natural movement of Wisdom's call from the outer roadways to the area **near the gateways of the city — לֵיָד שְׁעָרִים לְפִי קָרַת**, where the courts are in session. And then finally **at the doorways** into the inner chambers of specialized knowledge, **she cries out — מְבוֹא פְתָחִים תִּרְנָה**:

(ד) אֲלִיכֶם אִישִׁים אֶקְרָא
וְקוֹלִי אֶל בְּנֵי אָדָם:

I address myself especially **to you, O men** of character and education — **אִישִׁים**, who have prepared yourself and focused your mind on what I have to say. Thus, it is to you that **I** specifically **call** — **אֶקְרָא**, for I know that you will be more receptive to my message and you will persuade others to follow you. **But my voice** also goes out **to** all of **mankind** — **וְקוֹלִי אֶל בְּנֵי אָדָם**, for each person should be prepared to absorb what I have to say to the best of his ability.

(ה) הַבֵּינוּ פְתָאִים עֲרֻמָּה
וְכִסְיִלִים הַבֵּינוּ לֵב:

You men of character and education, think are already wise and have nothing to learn, recognize that there are matters in which you are **naive** people, and that if you continue to pursue wisdom you will find more meaning and truth. Learn to **understand cleverness** — **הַבֵּינוּ פְתָאִים עֲרֻמָּה** and see through the intellectual enticements of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination). You **fools**, who hate knowledge, open yourself up to wisdom and learn to **understand** knowledge in **your heart** — **וְכִסְיִלִים הַבֵּינוּ לֵב** so that you can use it to control your passions.

PART 2. THE TRUTH OF WISDOM.

(ו) שְׁמַעוּ כִּי נִגִּידִים אֲדַבֵּר
וּמִפֶּתַח שְׁפָתַי מִישָׁרִים:

Listen, for I will speak words of great significance — **שְׁמַעוּ כִּי נִגִּידִים אֲדַבֵּר**, that you will use to determine the direction of your life; they are not just entertaining analogies. **And the opening of my lips** will be to reveal **valid concepts** — **וּמִפֶּתַח שְׁפָתַי מִישָׁרִים**, not merely poetic allusions and figures of speech.

(ז) כִּי אֶמֶת יִהְיֶה חִכִּי
וְתוֹעֵבַת שְׁפָתַי רָשָׁע:

For my palate, which is an essential instrument in articulating the sounds of speech, **will utter the truth** of Hashem's Torah — **כִּי אֶמֶת יִהְיֶה חִכִּי** that you can rely on to guide you in life. **Evil is an abomination to my lips** — **וְתוֹעֵבַת שְׁפָתַי רָשָׁע** and so you can be sure that I will not mislead you in false directions.

(ח) בְּצֶדֶק כָּל אִמְרֵי פִי
אֵין בָּהֶם נִפְתָּל וְעִקְשׁ:

All the teachings of my mouth are presented **with a righteous** approach — **בְּצֶדֶק כָּל אִמְרֵי פִי**, so that topics are arranged in a logical sequence and are consistent among each other. **There is no twisting or distortion in them** — **אֵין בָּהֶם נִפְתָּל וְעִקְשׁ**; you will not be misled by poor organization of the material or inconsistencies.

(ט) כִּלְמֵי נֹכְחִים לִמְבִין
וַיִּשְׁרִים לְמִצְאֵי דַעַת:

The fool who has not prepared himself to understand the teachings of the Torah may misinterpret them, but **they are all correct** and true so that they can be relied upon **by the one who understands** the subject matter — **כִּלְמֵי נֹכְחִים לִמְבִין**. **And they are straightforward to those who strive for knowledge** — **וַיִּשְׁרִים לְמִצְאֵי דַעַת** as long as they make a sincere effort to understand.

PART 3. THE VALUE OF WISDOM.

(י) קָחוּ מוֹסְרֵי וְאַל כֶּסֶף

When you have a choice, put your efforts and your energy into acquiring my teachings rather than worldly goods. **Take my mussar** (lessons of moral discipline) as your currency **rather than silver** — **קָחוּ מוֹסְרֵי וְאַל כֶּסֶף**. When you use silver to acquire goods you are likely to expose yourself to harm and aggravation. But *mussar* will bring you benefits in this world and the next.

וְדַעַת מִחְרוֹץ נִבְחָר:

Silver is only a currency, but gold is treasure, valuable for its own sake. But gold pales in comparison to knowledge. **Take** the treasure of **knowledge rather than choice gold** — **וְדַעַת מִחְרוֹץ נִבְחָר**. Gold gives pleasure only to the eyes, whereas knowledge of Hashem can pervade your entire being with spiritual joy.

(יא) כִּי טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִפְּנִינִים

וְכָל חֲפָצִים לֹא יִשְׁווּ בָּהּ:

Wisdom surpasses anything you can buy for silver, even pearls. **For wisdom is better than pearls** — **כִּי טוֹבָה חֲכָמָה מִפְּנִינִים**, with which you might try to gain favor in the eyes of men because of their attractive glow. In contrast, wisdom earns

you favor in the eyes of both men and G-d. And even if silver can buy you physical pleasure, the value of **all** physical **desires cannot compare to** wisdom — **וְכָל חֲפָצִים לֹא יִשׁוּוּ בָהּ** for how can you compare something transitory with something eternal. (See *Mishlei* 03:15, Segment 03-04.)

(יב) אֲנִי חֲכָמָה שְׁכַנְתִּי עִרְמָה
וְדַעַת מְזֻמּוֹת אֲמַצָּא:

Listen to me for **I am wisdom** — **אֲנִי חֲכָמָה**; where **I dwell** there is **cleverness** — **שְׁכַנְתִּי עִרְמָה**, to enable you to weigh the consequences of any contemplated action and help you unravel the designs of the *yetzer hara* (evil inclination) that lead you to sin. **I** offer you the ability to **find the knowledge** that you can gain only by patient analysis of the **schemes** — **וְדַעַת מְזֻמּוֹת אֲמַצָּא** that are designed to trap you.

PART 4. THE MOTIVATION FOR WISDOM.

(יג) יִרְאַת ה' שְׁנֵאת רָע

The primary motivation that will bring you to wisdom is the **fear of Hashem** — **יִרְאַת ה'**, which will attune you to His will, so that you can apprehend the authority of His Torah and make the emotional commitment to study it. (See *Mishlei* 1:7, Segment 01-02) And what is the fear of Hashem in practice? It is **the hatred of evil** — **שְׁנֵאת רָע**, that is, the hatred of what Hashem hates.

גָּאָה וְגָאוֹן וְדָרְדָּר רָע
וּפִי תִהְפְּכוֹת שְׁנֵאתִי:

[*Wisdom declares:*] **I hate pride and haughtiness** — **גָּאָה וְגָאוֹן [שְׁנֵאתִי]**. Such an attitude is a direct challenge to Hashem. (See *Mishlei* 6:17, Segment 06-04). **I hate the way of evil** (a general pattern of bad *middos*) **and I hate a mouth that speaks with duplicity**, thereby provoking strife — **וְדָרְדָּר רָע וּפִי תִהְפְּכוֹת שְׁנֵאתִי**. (See also 6:19, *ibid.*)

(יד) לִי עֵצָה וְתוֹשִׁיָּה
אֲנִי בִינָה

Without the wisdom of the Torah you will not be able to give effective counsel to yourself or to others. [*Thus, Wisdom declares:*] **Counsel is mine** — **לִי עֵצָה**, as well as **the eternal truth of the Torah** — **וְתוֹשִׁיָּה**. Furthermore, **I am**

understanding — אָנִי בִינָה, for without a solid grounding in Torah wisdom, you will not be able to develop meaning insights.

לִי גְבוּרָה:

Ultimately, wisdom will help you build the strength of character to resist the *yetzer hara*. [Thus, Wisdom declares:] **strength** of character **is mine** — לִי גְבוּרָה.

(טו) בֵּי מְלָכִים יִמְלְכוּ

וְרוֹזְנִים יַחְקִקוּ צְדָקָה:

It is only **through me** that **kings will reign** properly — בֵּי מְלָכִים יִמְלְכוּ and exert political power in a way that benefits their people. If a king does not observe the laws of the Torah, his reign will not endure. Similarly, it is only through me that political **rulers will decree** true **justice** — וְרוֹזְנִים יַחְקִקוּ צְדָקָה.

(טז) בֵּי שָׁרִים יִשְׁרוּ

וְנִדְיָבִים כָּל שֹׁפְטֵי צְדָקָה:

It is only **through me** that **government officials will administer** their duties effectively — בֵּי שָׁרִים יִשְׁרוּ. The same holds true for **officers of the courts and all who judge righteously** — וְנִדְיָבִים כָּל שֹׁפְטֵי צְדָקָה.

(יז) אָנִי אֶהְבֵּי אֶהֱבֵי

וּמִשְׁחֲרֵי יִמְצְאוּנִי:

Don't be discouraged if you find learning difficult. **I love those who love me** — אָנִי אֶהְבֵּי אֶהֱבֵי. People who love each other think alike and share secrets with each other. If you have a positive attitude and you really care for me I will come closer to you and reveal my secrets at the same time that you come closer to me. **Those who seek me will find me** — וּמִשְׁחֲרֵי יִמְצְאוּנִי because Hashem will help them.

PART 5. THE REWARDS OF WISDOM.

(יח) עֵשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד אֶתִּי

הוֹן עֲתִיק וְצְדָקָה:

Don't think that if you dedicate your energies to learning Torah, you will be at a disadvantage. On the contrary, if you learn sincerely you will find that **wealth and honor are preserved with me** — עֵשֶׂר וְכָבוֹד אֶתִּי, if not in this World, then set aside for you in the World to Come. One way or the other, your wisdom will

ultimately bring you **great fortune and the** good name of **righteousness** — הוֹן
עֲתֵק וְצַדִּיקָה.

(יט) טוֹב פְּרִי מִחֲרוֹץ וּמִפָּז

The fruit of the wisdom that I have to offer is the basic knowledge which you acquire. **My fruit is better than gold**, even **fine gold** — טוֹב פְּרִי מִחֲרוֹץ וּמִפָּז. Precious metals can be stored and admired for as long as you live in this world, but the knowledge that you gain through wisdom is available to you in the World to Come, as well.

וּתְבוּאַתִּי מִכֶּסֶף נְבָחָר:

And when my wisdom is matured through review and reflection, it becomes like agricultural produce that has value in the marketplace. You will then find it comparable to choice silver which has value as a tool for conducting business. But **my produce is** even **better than choice silver** — וּתְבוּאַתִּי מִכֶּסֶף נְבָחָר because you can use matured wisdom to create new insights through logical deduction and analysis. These are worth far more than the things you can buy with silver.

(כ) בְּאַרְחַ צְדִיקָה אֶהְלֵךְ:

בְּתוֹךְ נְתִיבוֹת מִשְׁפָּט:

To acquire wisdom you must practice generous righteousness with all people. At the same time you must practice strict justice with yourself, placing the highest demands on your own behavior. **For I walk on the public road of righteousness** — בְּאַרְחַ צְדִיקָה אֶהְלֵךְ. And I stay centered **within the narrow pathways of justice** — בְּתוֹךְ נְתִיבוֹת מִשְׁפָּט, where the individual veers neither to the right or left.

(כא) לְהַנְחִיל אֶהְבִּי יֵשׁ:

וְאַצְרִיתֵיהֶם אֲמַלֵּא:

You will find that the rewards of achieving wisdom follow the same principles as the requirements for achieving it. If you practice strict justice with yourself, then in the World to Come you will be granted what you have rightfully earned by your behavior. My policy is **to grant permanently to those who love me** — לְהַנְחִיל אֶהְבִּי, **the existing** fruit of their own virtue — יֵשׁ. **And I will fill their storehouses** — וְאַצְרִיתֵיהֶם אֲמַלֵּא with generous bounty, far beyond what they have earned.

PART 6. THE ORIGIN OF WISDOM.

(כב) ה' קִנְנִי רֵאשִׁית דְּרַכּוֹ

קִדְּם מִפְּעֻלּוֹ מֵאָז:

[Wisdom declares:] I already **belonged to Hashem as the first of His way** of creating the world — ה' קִנְנִי רֵאשִׁית דְּרַכּוֹ. In fact I was the essential instrument and purpose of Creation. I was His intent and His plan **before His works of old** — קִדְּם מִפְּעֻלּוֹ מֵאָז.

(כג) מֵעוֹלָם נִסְכַּחְתִּי מֵרֵאשִׁ

מִקְדָּמֵי אֶרֶץ:

I was **consecrated** to reign **from the beginning of eternity** — מֵעוֹלָם מֵרֵאשִׁ. I was the first to be created **among** the creations that **preceded the earth** — מִקְדָּמֵי אֶרֶץ.

(כד) בְּאֵין תְּהִמוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי

אֵין מַעֲיִנוֹת נִכְבְּדֵי מַיִם:

I was **formed** when there were still **no watery depths**, — בְּאֵין תְּהִמוֹת; **when there were no pools abounding with water** — בְּאֵין מַעֲיִנוֹת; **נִכְבְּדֵי מַיִם**. This refers to the first stages of the earth's emergence from formlessness. It was the spirit of Divine wisdom that hovered over the abyss before the separation of the elements of Creation.

(כה) בְּטָרָם הָרִים הִטְבְּעוּ

לִפְנֵי גְבְעוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי:

I was formed **before the mountains were made firm** — בְּטָרָם הָרִים הִטְבְּעוּ in the midst of the waters. I was formed **before the hills** — לִפְנֵי גְבְעוֹת חוֹלְלָתִי.

(כו) עַד לֹא עָשָׂה אֶרֶץ וְחוּצוֹת

וְרֵאשִׁ עֲפָרוֹת תִּבְּל:

I was formed **when He had not yet made** — עַד לֹא עָשָׂה **the core regions of the earth or the outlying regions** — אֶרֶץ וְחוּצוֹת or **the first dust of the inhabited world** — וְרֵאשִׁ עֲפָרוֹת תִּבְּל.

(כז) בְּהִכִּינוֹ שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָנִי

בְּחֹקוֹ חֹג עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם:

When He established the heavens, I was there – בְּהִכִּינוֹ שָׁמַיִם שָׁם אָנִי. When He set a spherical shape to the face of the deep, I was there – בְּחֹקוֹ חֹג עַל פְּנֵי תְהוֹם. The world emerged into existence as a result of the forms and boundaries established through wisdom.

(כח) בְּאַמְצוֹ שְׁחָקִים מִמַּעַל

בְּעִזּוֹ עֵינֹת תְהוֹם:

I was there **when He braced the skies above – בְּאַמְצוֹ שְׁחָקִים מִמַּעַל.** I was there **when he reinforced the wellsprings of the watery depths – בְּעִזּוֹ עֵינֹת תְהוֹם.**

(כט) בְּשׁוּמוֹ לַיָּם חֶקוֹ

וּמַיִם לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ פִּיּוֹ

בְּחֹקוֹ מוֹסְדֵי אֶרֶץ:

I was there **when He set a boundary to the sea – בְּשׁוּמוֹ לַיָּם חֶקוֹ that the waters would not transgress His word – וּמַיִם לֹא יַעֲבְרוּ פִּיּוֹ.** I was there **when He decreed the foundations of the earth not to shift – בְּחֹקוֹ מוֹסְדֵי אֶרֶץ.**

(ל) וְאֶהְיֶה אֶצְלוֹ אֶמּוֹן

וְאֶהְיֶה שֶׁעֲשָׂעִים יוֹם יוֹם

מִשְׁחֻקַּת לְפָנָיו בְּכָל עֵת:

Before the appearance of mankind, **I was** like **His** sweet **infant child – וְאֶהְיֶה אֶצְלוֹ אֶמּוֹן, I was then His delight every day – וְאֶהְיֶה שֶׁעֲשָׂעִים יוֹם יוֹם frolicking before Him at all times – מִשְׁחֻקַּת לְפָנָיו בְּכָל עֵת.** He enjoyed seeing me develop as a parent takes pleasure in watching his child discover what it can do. He took pleasure in seeing wisdom implemented in the acts of Creation.

(לא) מִשְׁחֻקַּת בְּתֵבֶל אֶרֶצוֹ

וְשֶׁעֲשָׂעִי אֶת בְּנֵי אָדָם:

Later, when man was created, **I frolicked in the inhabited areas of His earth – מִשְׁחֻקַּת בְּתֵבֶל אֶרֶצוֹ and became a delight to mankind – וְשֶׁעֲשָׂעִי אֶת בְּנֵי אָדָם.** Wisdom then became an essential component in the life of men and Hashem rejoiced in how mankind took to wisdom, meditated on it and acted on it.

PART 7. HEEDING WISDOM.

(לב) וְעַתָּה בְּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי
וְאַשְׁרֵי דַרְכֵי יִשְׁמְרוּ:

And now, children — וְעַתָּה בְּנִים, now that you have heard about the great value of wisdom, **listen to me** — וְעַתָּה בְּנִים שְׁמְעוּ לִי and don't be lax about making the effort to acquire wisdom. **Fortunate are those who keep to my ways** — וְאַשְׁרֵי דַרְכֵי יִשְׁמְרוּ, because these are the ways by which you will acquire wisdom.

(לג) שְׁמְעוּ מוֹסֵר
וְחַכְמוּ וְאַל תִּפְרְעוּ

Listen to and obey the teachings of *mussar* (moral discipline). **And** then, once you have the fear of Hashem, you will be able to **gain wisdom** — שְׁמְעוּ מוֹסֵר וְחַכְמוּ and fully apply it in your life. **Do not refuse** the message of wisdom — וְאַל תִּפְרְעוּ, which is to obey the laws of Creation. Do not give yourself over to unrestrained behavior.

(לד) אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם שִׁמַּע לִי
לְשֶׁקֶד עַל דַּלְתֹתַי יוֹם יוֹם
לְשֹׁמֵר מְזוּזוֹת פְּתָחַי:

Fortunate is the person who listens to me — אֲשֶׁרִי אָדָם שִׁמַּע לִי, **coming regularly to my doors every day** — לְשֶׁקֶד עַל דַּלְתֹתַי יוֹם יוֹם, even when the doors are closed and the learning is difficult. But he perseveres and returns again and again **to the doorposts of my entranceways** — לְשֹׁמֵר מְזוּזוֹת פְּתָחַי. Then, if he persists, and approaches wisdom through its doorways, that is, its basic principles, he will gradually become fully versed in wisdom and will be able to live his life accordingly.

(לה) כִּי מִצְאֵי מְצָא חַיִּים
וַיִּפֶק רְצוֹן מֵה':

For he who finds me finds life — כִּי מִצְאֵי מְצָא חַיִּים for then he finds Hashem, the Author of life. Hashem has bound up life with the wisdom He created. In this way, the person **obtains the goodwill of Hashem** — וַיִּפֶק רְצוֹן מֵה', Who grants the individual life and well-being. When the gates of wisdom open, the vision of wisdom that the person sees, invigorates him and fills him with new energy in both

body and spirit.

וְחַטָּאֵי חַמְסַּנְיָא נִפְשׁוּ
כָּל מְשֻׁנְאֵי אֶהְבוּ מוֹת:

וְחַטָּאֵי חַמְסַּנְיָא — **But the one who sins against me does violence to his soul** — **נִפְשׁוּ**. **כָּל מְשֻׁנְאֵי אֶהְבוּ מוֹת** — **All who hate me love death** — Since life is nourished by wisdom, the enemies of wisdom are the enemies of life, which means they are the allies of death.

Sources

The primary sources used in the interpretation of the verses of this segment are listed below.

- | | |
|--|--|
| א - המאירי, רלב"ג, חנוך לנער, מצודות, מלבי"ם | כ - אבן עזרא, הגר"א, מלבי"ם |
| ב - מצודות, מלבי"ם | כא - אבן עזרא, הגר"א, מלבי"ם |
| ג - מצודות, שבט מיהודה, מלבי"ם | כב - רש"י, אבן עזרא, המאירי, מצודות, מלבי"ם, רשר"ה |
| ד - חנוך לנער, מלבי"ם | כג - המאירי, רלב"ג |
| ה - חנוך לנער, הגר"א, מלבי"ם | כד - מלבי"ם |
| ו - רש"י, רלב"ג, חנוך לנער, | כה - רש"י, אבן עזרא, מצודות |
| ז - מדרש משלי, המאירי, מצודות | כו - המאירי, מצודות, מלבי"ם |
| ח - חנוך לנער, הגר"א | כז - רש"י, חנוך לנער |
| ט - אבן עזרא, המאירי, רלב"ג, חנוך לנער | כח - אבן עזרא, רלב"ג |
| י - המאירי, רבינו בחיי, מלבי"ם | כט - אבן עזרא, המאירי |
| יא - רש"י, מלבי"ם, | ל - רלב"ג, חנוך לנער, מצודות |
| יב - רש"י, המאירי, אבן יחיאל, מצודות, מלבי"ם | לא - רלב"ג, מצודות, מלבי"ם |
| יג - המאירי, מלבי"ם | לב - רלב"ג, חנוך לנער, |
| יד - המאירי, חנוך לנער, מצודות, מלבי"ם | לג - רש"י, חנוך לנער, מלבי"ם |
| טו - רש"י, אבן עזרא, מצודות, מלבי"ם | לד - אבן עזרא, המאירי, חנוך לנער, מלבי"ם |
| טז - מצודות | לה - מדרש משלי, מצודות, הגר"א, מלבי"ם |
| יז - המאירי, מצודות, מלבי"ם | לו - מצודות, מלבי"ם |
| יח - אבן עזרא, המאירי, הגר"א | |
| יט - מלבי"ם | |

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